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RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 3992

UNCLAS QUITO 001163

STATE FOR INL/LP  
STATE FOR WHA/PPC  
ONDCP FOR OCONNOR

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: NAS ECUADOR QUARTERLY ACTIVITIES REPORT - OCTOBER-DECEMBER

11. (U) HIGHLIGHTS:

- Ambassador Inaugurates Two Canine Facilities
- NAS Judicial Team Helps Shape New Laws
- Large Maritime and Land Seizures
- New Equipment to Modernize Detection Capabilities
- Coca Plants Eradicated
- NAS Ecuador Desk Officer Visits

AMBASSADOR INAUGURATES TWO CANINE FACILITIES

12. (U) In late October, the Ambassador inaugurated a new building at the Narcotics Police National Canine Training Center in Quito. NAS built the original facility in 2001 and has upgraded the facility over the years to accommodate growth of the canine program. The new building, which cost USD 450k, includes veterinarian facilities, office space and dormitories to house the approximately 40 guides in residence at the training center. This was the first NAS facility inaugurated by the Ambassador since her arrival in Ecuador in August and it generated good national press coverage.

13. (U) In the third week of November, the Ambassador inaugurated another canine program project, a new building and refurbished areas of the Narcotics Police Guayaquil Airport Facility. The new building includes office space and dormitories for male and female guides residing at the facility. Refurbished areas included an expansion of kennels from 18 to 36 and upgrades to the veterinarian facilities. Costs for the project totaled USD 600k. As part of the ceremony, the Ambassador presented one of the guides and his dog an award for a recent 96 kilo cocaine bust. A week later, dogs from the unit alerted to 126 kilos of cocaine on a KLM flight departing to Amsterdam. Apparently they like their new home!

NAS ASSISTANCE TO LEGAL REFORMS

14. (U) Following the September national referendum approving a new Constitution, the NAS justice program has been staying involved and providing technical assistance to government entities grappling with implementation of the new Constitution. The Constitution calls for sweeping changes in the structure of the judicial branch and the powers of these new entities. With its excellent contacts in the judicial sector and the technical assistance available to it through an existing grant with the American Bar Association, the NAS justice team is providing assistance to councils created by the GOE to reform the criminal procedures code, the money laundering law and

the anti-narcotics law. Each of these laws has well known deficiencies that NAS has been working to change for years, and the implementation of the new Constitution provides an opportunity to make these changes a reality. The restructuring of the judiciary and uncertainty regarding the processing of criminal and other cases creates an additional challenge but we are pleased to be providing information and technical assistance when appropriate to positively influence the outcome.

#### LARGE MARITIME AND LAND SEIZURES

¶5. (U) In late October, after boarding a suspicious Ecuadorian fishing vessel approximately 300 miles off the coast of Ecuador and finding only traces of cocaine, a U.S. asset interdicted two smaller boats that had earlier been attached to the larger vessel but were now in open water. These smaller boats, the Dorado and Albacora, had a total of 1.48 metric tons of cocaine concealed in compartments near their sterns. A search for three other smaller boats that were earlier also attached to the larger vessel was unsuccessful. It is believed that the original load on the larger vessel was probably 4-6 metric tons, which was broken down and dispersed on the smaller boats when the U.S. asset approached. The incident may indicate at least one of the methods traffickers are using to avoid the multi-ton seizures that were occurring in 2005-2006 but which have fallen off significantly since.

¶6. (U) In September, Ecuadorian Naval Infantry (Marines) forces stationed at the facility where NAS completed a pier last year were patrolling the estuaries in Esmeraldas province near the Colombian border when they encountered an Ecuadorian and two Colombians at a remote dwelling. Upon inspection, the forces found 3.8 metric tons of cocaine wrapped in plastic bales, possibly in preparation for the loading of a Self-Propelled Semi-Submersible watercraft.

#### NEW EQUIPMENT TO MODERNIZE DETECTION CAPABILITIES

¶7. (U) In November, NAS received 11 infrared spectrometers (6 IdentifierIR and 5 HazmatIDs) to enhance the narcotics detection capabilities of the narcotics police. Until these purchases, the police relied on ion scanners in the field and gas chromatographers in the police laboratory to determine if substances contained illegal narcotics. With these new pieces of equipment in strategic field locations and in police laboratories in Quito and Guayaquil, substance testing will be simpler, faster and more accurate.

¶8. (U) Also in November, NAS received two backscatter vans, which are mobile x-ray platforms capable of "looking into" vehicles and containers that pass beside the vans. The narcotics police have assigned teams to protect and operate the units, periodically moving them among strategic locations throughout the country. This is a new capability for the narcotics police in Ecuador and we expect that it will provide excellent results.

#### COCA PLANTS ERADICATED

¶9. (U) In November, the Special Mobile Antinarcotics Police (GEMA) found and manually eradicated 40,000 coca plants in the Esmeraldas Province near the Colombian border.

#### DESK OFFICER VISIT

¶10. (U) INL/LP's Ecuador Desk Officer, Tamara Crouse, visited Ecuador the third week in November for an orientation with NAS programs in the country. She travelled with NAS staff to Guayaquil, Manta, Tulcan and Quito and met with Embassy staff and host country counterparts to learn about projects within each of our three areas of emphasis; police, military and judicial programs. Key issues included the possibility of providing assistance to the GOE in the area of prison reform and the development of a polygraph capability in the Narcotics Police. HODGES